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Evaluation

Evaluation of UNDP contribution to disaster prevention and recovery

Executive Summary

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I. Introduction

1. The evaluation of UNDP's contribution to disaster prevention and recovery was part of the Evaluation Office work programme for 2009-2010.

2. The evaluation takes as its starting point important natural disaster trends and consequences: The number of disasters has been on the rise this past decade, and their increasing frequency and scale pose mounting economic and humanitarian challenges. Natural disasters have a disproportionate impact on the poor in developing countries, and the associated risks are strongly associated with poverty. In countries with medium to low levels of income and weaker governance, disasters can compound poverty and inequality and reverse development gains. Losses from disasters triggered by natural hazards are threatening achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries.

3. Besides short-term effects such as direct economic loss, disasters hinder long-term human development and human security. There is considerable evidence that impact of disasters on national economies adversely affects social investments, particularly in health and education, and investments that provide employment and income. Disaster risk reduction and sustainable human development therefore are mutually supportive goals.

4. Disaster risk reduction is particularly important for highly vulnerable populations, such as those living in disaster-prone regions, small island developing states and societies weakened by armed conflict. The enormous consequences of disasters for human development and economic growth necessitate effective management of disaster risk as an integral part of development planning. Similarly, a more integrated approach during disaster recovery and reconstruction can help to reduce future risks.

5. This evaluation examines the contribution of UNDP to strengthening national capacities in disaster risk management and recovery since 2000. The evaluation assesses the relevance of UNDP's work with respect to national priorities and the UNDP mandate; the effectiveness of development results; the efficiency of institutional and programming arrangements; and the sustainability of resulting benefits. It provides insights for UNDP in its emerging work of reducing vulnerability to natural disasters as part of support to environment management and adaptation to climate change. The evaluation analyses UNDP policies, strategies and programmes at global, regional and country levels; implementation of related projects; and cooperation in disaster prevention and recovery with other United Nations agencies, international organizations and donors. The evaluation provides a retrospective and prospective assessment of the potential contribution of UNDP.

6. The evaluation builds on the objectives outlined in the first and second multi-year funding frameworks (2000-2003 and 2004-2007), the current strategic plan (2008-2013) and the UNDP strategic vision on assistance to crisis-affected countries. The programme frameworks emphasized three key areas of support in disaster risk management: a) strengthening national capacities in disaster prevention and risk reduction and reducing vulnerability to future events; b) support to response and recovery; and c) addressing UNDP programming principles in gender equality and South-South cooperation. In 2008 UNDP developed the 'Eight Point Agenda' for women's empowerment and gender equality in crisis prevention and recovery. It

requires that 15 percent of the funds for crisis-related activities are allocated for interventions that promote gender equality.

7. The evaluation includes case studies in nine countries (Colombia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mexico, Mozambique and Myanmar) conducted by national and international consultants. These case studies were supplemented by a meta-analysis of the Assessments of Development Results and evaluations commissioned by UNDP country offices; telephone interviews in 15 other countries; and extensive interviews at UNDP headquarters and regional service centres and with key partner organizations.

8. The evaluation considers as part of the strategic framework relevant international conventions and multilateral agreements developed over the past decade. These include formation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005) and the Bali Action Plan (2007). The Millennium Development Goals have further emphasized disaster reduction and mitigation as a development issue. The Bali Action Plan negotiations have highlighted vulnerability and disaster risk reduction as key elements of climate change adaptation.

9. The evaluation covers UNDP technical support in disaster prevention and recovery as well as its management roles, such as assisting United Nations resident coordinators and responding to government requests for international support coordination in the early recovery period after natural disasters.

II. Findings

10. **UNDP has helped countries formulate policies for disaster management, but challenges remain in integrating disaster risk reduction into development planning.**

11. UNDP combines multisector programming in key development areas, extensive country- level presence and the ability to mobilize technical expertise. UNDP has supported policy formulation and helped to establish an enabling environment for building disaster management institutions in over 30 countries. Partly as a consequence, governments have increasingly participated in international and regional debates and cooperation has grown on disaster risk management and climate change over the past decade. This is especially the case among countries with high disaster and climate risk.

12. Several of the case studies demonstrate that more efforts are needed to harmonize roles, responsibilities and accountability in the institutions responsible for disaster risk management. Most countries have also struggled with the challenge of empowering local governments to play a greater role in disaster risk management.

13. Disaster risk reduction requires long-term planning and more sustained efforts at the national level. It has been particularly challenging for UNDP to support countries to integrate disaster risk reduction into development planning.

14. **In some countries disaster risk reduction is being more closely integrated with other UNDP priorities such as poverty reduction, governance and adaptation to climate change. In many others this integration has not been given sufficient priority.**

15. In Mexico, integration of the disaster risk reduction in local development programmes significantly contributed to sustaining development investments at the local level. Attempts to strengthen disaster risk management capacities at the local level are also evident in Bangladesh. Disaster risk reduction is addressed as a governance issue in Honduras. But many country programmes have not made explicit links between disaster prevention and other development programming.

16. In the past three years, there has been an increase in initiatives to address climate change as a development issue, largely through the environment portfolio of UNDP. Although many disaster risk reduction objectives correlate with climate change objectives, the evaluation indicates limited integrated programming in this area. A notable exception is the Maldives, where the nexus of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation has been well established. A recent series of agreements among UNDP policy and practice bureaus to explore and define the nature of cooperation on climate change adaptation may provide opportunities for closer integration in the future.

17. **Community preparedness initiatives can strengthen local capacities, yet they are typically constrained by poor institutionalization of programme processes and outcomes.**

18. Disaster preparedness and risk reduction initiatives at the local level comprise about 54 percent of UNDP's disaster risk reduction interventions and have been implemented in 27 countries. Some programmes have produced important achievements. In India and Mexico, for example, the programmes successfully demonstrated the importance of local preparedness and its benefits. In most cases, however, community programmes have not influenced government programmes and policies. UNDP has had difficulty establishing cooperation among local, state and national governments.

19. **UNDP has spurred participation of women in community initiatives in disaster recovery and prevention, yet the application of gender policies has been uneven. More work is needed to achieve leadership and funding targets.**

20. UNDP has taken significant policy measures to further gender equality in crisis-related programming, and specific attention has been paid to the needs of women. But gender policies have not been systematically implemented. The Eight Point Agenda and the mandatory allocation of 15 percent of the budget for crisis-related programming is an important and unique step taken by UNDP to address issues related to gender and women. While there are indications that these measures are gaining acceptability, only modest efforts have so far been made to integrate gender issues in design and implementation of disaster prevention and recovery programmes.

21. UNDP has ensured participation of women, particularly those from indigenous and vulnerable groups, in community projects and programmes. However, success has been limited when it comes to developing a more coherent approach to integrating gender-related concerns into policy and government programming.

22. UNDP programmes often define achievement narrowly, construing the presence of women in community-level interventions as achievement of gender concerns. This fails to take into account the extent to which women have the opportunity to participate in leadership positions and the extent to which their perspectives and aspirations have been considered.

23. **UNDP support to disaster recovery lacks a strategic focus and has not been used effectively to strengthen national ownership and capacity.**

24. UNDP plays multiple roles in post-disaster situations: it supports short term micro-level livelihood activities and shelter construction, aids United Nations coordination and provides longer term support to strengthen administrative systems and improve government capacities. Evidence from the case studies suggests that these various roles are not clear to disaster recovery partners, and in some cases partners doubt that UNDP has the capacity to carry out assigned tasks.

25. Micro-level livelihood activities and shelter construction have in many cases achieved intended outcomes. But the merits of UNDP involvement need to be considered in the context of the many other actors providing this type of support, including NGOs and community-based organizations.

26. It has been challenging for UNDP to address long-term recovery issues such as strengthening administrative procedures and systems and coordination capacities of government. Limited attention has gone to support for coordination, technical issues (such as land planning, coastal regulations, housing policy) and tackling the causes of vulnerability among specific high-risk groups.

27. **UNDP has made progress in supporting early recovery cluster coordination. However issues remain with respect to communicating the need for the cluster approach, facilitating wider coordination and enhancing national ownership.**

28. UNDP has placed considerable emphasis on support to early recovery cluster coordination. While UNDP has the advantage of bringing a development perspective into the early recovery process, there were shortcomings in its efforts to leverage its partnership with governments at different levels and to enhance national ownership in early recovery cluster coordination.

29. In some situations national governments have been reluctant to operationalize the cluster approach. It may not be acceptable to all governments or other humanitarian stakeholders (as seen in Latin America and elsewhere), which calls for a more nuanced use of it.

30. There are indications that national and local NGOs have not been well integrated into early recovery cluster coordination. The evaluation also found limitations in collaboration with development stakeholders vis-à-vis humanitarian stakeholders. Better communication between UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has proved critical to early recovery cluster coordination.

31. **Complex programme management and administrative procedures constrain effective programming.**

32. Complex and inflexible procedures hinder programme performance and effectiveness. Programme management gets constrained by overambitious outcomes, programmes with short timeframes, unviable deadlines for accomplishing complex tasks, weak synergies between different areas of the programme and poor reporting and monitoring.

33. While quality, transparency and accountability in procurement and project approvals should never be compromised, more efforts are needed to simplify

UNDP's administrative procedures for implementation during crises. The recently introduced fast track policy is a step in this direction. Though it is early in the pilot phase, some managers in country offices have expressed concern that the measures in the fast track have not gone far enough to facilitate speedy implementation in crisis situations.

III. Conclusions

Conclusion 1: While UNDP strategic priorities acknowledge the linkages between poverty reduction, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction, these strategies are not systematically implemented.

34. The strategic plan identifies disaster risk reduction as an important factor in reducing poverty and vulnerability and achieving the Millennium Development Goals and points out that disasters disproportionally affect the poorest. Similarly, it makes explicit linkages between disaster risk reduction and sustainable environment and adaptation. Despite this emphasis, implementation has been constrained by the absence of operational frameworks for integrating cross-cutting issues into UNDP programme areas, both in planning and implementation.

35. The severity of recent disasters has pushed the issue of climate change adaptation into the forefront, with direct implications for UNDP programming. With its support to national governments both before and after disasters, coupled with extensive country support mechanisms in place covering the environmental protection aspects of climate change, UNDP is in a pivotal position to help countries develop effective adaptation strategies.

36. Slow-onset disasters such as drought are treated as part of poverty reduction and sustainable environment support and are not in the purview of disaster risk management. The impact of climate change is likely to blur the boundaries between slow-onset and rapid-onset disasters, and measures to improve coordination among programme areas are critical.

Conclusion 2: National ownership of disaster risk reduction strategies is key to achieving UNDP objectives in poverty reduction and sustainable development.

37. UNDP can play a stronger role in national and international partnerships because of its extensive country-level presence, well-established relationships with governments, neutrality and strong programme support in key areas of development. However, these advantages have not been used effectively to play a leadership role in issues related to recovery, and disaster risk reduction. UNDP has not always been successful in building on its strengths at the national level, particularly on its development-related support.

38. While UNDP has strong partnerships with local government and in communities, it has not leveraged such partnerships to inform national processes and strategies. More reactive engagements and a lack of clearly thought-out strategies for seeking partnerships have limited UNDP contribution.

39. While UNDP has made progress in supporting early recovery cluster coordination, its role at the national level has been limited due to challenges in communicating the need for such an approach and facilitating wider coordination and national ownership. Establishing linkages between humanitarian interventions

and development processes has often been constrained by a narrowly perceived role of cluster lead and inter-agency dynamics. Early recovery, both as a cluster and as a concept, requires more deliberation with stakeholders at the country level and with other United Nations agencies. It is evident that the availability of human and financial resources and technical support has influenced the success of early recovery cluster coordination.

40. **Conclusion 3: UNDP has achieved a measure of success in many micro-level, short-term recovery activities, but at the cost of its longer term focus on risk reduction and development.**

41. Disaster response and recovery very often involves enormous public resources and requires transparent systems. Often UNDP has not given adequate priority to enabling countries to take more effective, sustainable recovery actions. This gap exists in most disaster response efforts, as governments and donors get focused on short-term solutions addressing immediate needs of affected populations, such as livelihood, housing and public infrastructure. UNDP has the flexibility to design longer term recovery programmes to suit country-specific needs and priorities within the disaster context.

IV. Recommendations

***Recommendation 1:* UNDP should clarify that its principal area of focus in disaster prevention and recovery efforts is to assist countries on development dimensions, especially risk reduction and vulnerability.**

42. Addressing social and economic vulnerability requires a more comprehensive programming approach, including joint efforts with poverty reduction, sustainable development and governance programmes. UNDP should provide an operational framework for addressing disaster risk reduction as a cross-cutting issue in development programming.

43. Support to prevent or mitigate slow-onset disasters entails a different approach and alternative strategies. It will require closer coordination with poverty reduction and environment programmes and new partnerships with different government agencies and other stakeholders.

***Recommendation 2:* A stronger commitment is needed to implement UNDP's corporate gender policies and further gender equality in crisis programming.**

44. UNDP should continue the mandatory allocation of funds and improve capacities for systematic application of gender policies in programme planning and implementation. The regional bureaux should play a more active role in implementing the Eight Point Agenda and allocating funds.

45. UNDP should enhance its contribution to policy discussions and debates on gender and public resource allocations at the national level. More systematic support is required for gender-sensitive risk and vulnerability assessments and inclusion of the gender dimension in the national poverty reduction and disaster risk reduction policies.

Recommendation 3: The UNDP disaster risk reduction strategy should be revised to more directly address adaptation to climate change.

46. UNDP should have a unified strategy at country level to support government efforts in integrating climate and disaster risk reduction. UNDP should leverage its strength in both areas to increase access to available funds.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should minimize micro-level, short-term recovery activities that do not contribute to strengthening national capacities, policies or practice. UNDP support should be oriented towards strengthening national capacities for disaster risk reduction and sustainable long-term recovery.

47. During the early recovery phase UNDP should facilitate coordination of activities and support longer term capacity building. This should emphasize strengthening of governance mechanisms to integrate risk reduction in development planning. During early recovery cluster coordination, efforts should go beyond short-term interventions to better engage development stakeholders and enhance national ownership.

Recommendation 5: UNDP should improve administrative procedures that constrain effective programming in natural disasters.

48. Administrative and programming procedures should not only ensure accountability but also facilitate country offices to respond faster with well-planned interventions. UNDP should continue to refine its administrative procedures to enable faster procurement, staff recruitment and flexibility in funding during crises.